

224 hunting of any other animal); if this rule is not observed the bears will escape from their trap unharmed. Bear skins and also their gall bladders which are much sought after by the Chinese as aphrodisiacs (they fetch Rs. 5 apiece in Kalimpong) were an inducement to catch these animals when money was not plentiful or non-existent; nowadays with money from cardamum there is less economic justification for taking the risks involved. Catching small birds in snares does not count as hunting; it is one of the commonest pursuits of boys after the age of about eight, who take their catches home as presents for their mother.

ii

241 The agricultural land in Zongu can be divided into two categories: the land under permanent cultivation, and the land which is cleared for crops once in every eight years. The permanent cultivation is of three types; there is the *sing* or field-garden against the house, cardamum fields and rice terraces. The two latter types of cultivation, which are now of very great importance in Lepcha life, are both very modern: cardamum was introduced at the beginning of the century, rice terraces for wet paddy less than twenty years ago. Potentially this permanent cultivation has introduced a new note into Lepcha life, though so far the effect is not noticeable. Both cardamum fields and rice terraces demand a certain amount of hard initial labour, after which they acquire, as it were, a capital value; this is less true of cardamum, which needs replanting every ten years, than of the rice terraces; to build these a considerable amount of work is needed, but once they are made a heavy crop can be raised from them with relatively little labour.

461 Until the beginning of this century the wealth of a Lepcha household depended on the energy of its members and on the proportion of able-bodied adults to dependants—children and the old and invalid—; if there was more than one dependent to one able-bodied adult life was liable to be rather hard. Nowadays it is theoretically possible that a lazy heir of industrious ancestors might be in a better position in the community than his own industry warranted. Formerly the inevitable rule of Lepcha economy was 'from each according to his ability; to each according to his work', tempered by the co-operation and willing help which was and is freely given to those afflicted by temporary or permanent

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misfortune. Today this is not quite so true; the creation of permanent fields requires the renunciation of immediate good for future benefits, for the household which builds these fields will not be able to get as large a harvest as would otherwise be possible. The consequence is that the difference between the richest and the poorest in the community has somewhat increased, and that households which have a proportionately larger number of working adults to dependents are in a temporarily favoured position. So of course is the Mandal,¹ who can use the free labour to which he is entitled to have terraces made for him.

Up to the present as far as I can tell this new state of affairs has made no important difference to the Lepcha community; their habits of co-operation nullify the differences in wealth. One man even went so far as to say that he would not like to be the richest person in the community, unless everybody else was equally prosperous, as he would have to give all his superfluity to help others. Extra wealth carries with it extra duties; and in point of fact the richest people in Lingthem were also the most heavily indebted. At the same time it must be emphasised that it is the desire of every Lepcha to be rich; when I asked children what they would most like to be, a clever man, or a learned and respected lama, or a great hunter, or a rich man, they would one and all plump for being rich. Chimpet, the son of Tafoor, a member of the most devout lamaist family in Lingthem, and who was himself starting his religious instruction said 'I should like to go and study religion in a Tibetan monastery, but I don't want to go to the State school at Gangtok; the things they teach you there are quite useless, while a lama always gets good presents and feasts. Why, when a rich man dies even the *kané*, the acolyte attending the officiating lama, is given a fine plate and cup and clothes!'²

Unless the whole orientation of Lepcha life is changed even greater differences in actual wealth will not fundamentally alter the situation, for there is no possibility of any Lepcha, however rich, exploiting his neighbour, however poor. Help in the work of house or field is always repaid by equivalent help; the most

¹ See Chapter Five, p. 128.

² Chimpet's view of the value of secular education is not shared by his father or the other more serious adult members of the community. They have petitioned the State to establish a boarding school in Zongu, for they consider that the extra work entailed by the older children's absence would be counter-balanced by the value of the education received.

867 the gift-giving habit was already established; very often after I
 123 had given them some Japanese flowers a small child would come
 431 tottering up to me with either a live flower or a few bright coloured
 seeds tightly clutched in its hand. Almost the only positive lesson
 [576] in good manners the children are taught is that when elders give them
 a present they must receive it with joined hands; and one day
 Pembu's four-year-old son scolded me severely because I took his
 gift of a cactus blossom in one hand only.

ii

● 461 My type-picture of the Lepchas is of a crowd gathered for some
 512 feast or ceremony. In point of fact this only represents a very
 small portion of their lives; but on work-days they are so widely
 scattered as to be invisible and almost unfindable in the open
 country; often for days at a time they are absent from home,
 working in distant fields, and sleeping in the field-house; when
 they do return home in the evening they are usually tired and go
 to sleep fairly shortly after the evening meal.

512 The Lepcha working-day starts at cock-crow when everybody
 264 gets up; a substantial cold meal, usually consisting of grain, with
 perhaps some milk and any meat or flavourings which may be
 available is eaten; it is usually accompanied by tea. Then every-
 body goes to their work in the fields or forests, taking with them
 some popped corn or cold cooked rice in their haversack to nibble
 if they feel hungry during the day's work. In the evening towards
 sundown they come home for the second meal of the day. The
 youngest daughter-in-law is meant to do the cooking, under the
 direction of the house-mother, or, if she be too old, of the eldest
 daughter-in-law, who gives out the supplies; but in practice all
 the women present lend a hand. If there are no women free, men
 will do the cooking; but it is considered slightly degrading for
 a house-father to have to prepare his own meal. Each evening
 enough is cooked to serve for that evening and also for the following
 morning.

While the food is being prepared the men may weave mats or
 baskets, or do other odd jobs about the house, or they may sit and
 drink *chi*. Everybody eats the main meal together; the house-
 mother hands out the food, serving the oldest members first; if
 there are young children the fathers will feed the daughters and the
 mothers the sons. After the evening meal there may be a visit either

512 to visit a girl with whom he has made an appointment, to return home before dawn; but most people sleep heavily after the day's work.

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● [461] Nine days out of ten this represents the normal Lepcha life, for the Lepchas are extremely hard-working and industrious; though they do not work fast they work steadily and for very long hours. But the monotony of working life is continually broken up by feasts and ceremonies; there are the regular bi-monthly monastery feasts, and in most months there are one or more calendrical lamaist festivals; people are born, or marry, or die, or fall ill, and these are all occasions for feasts for the friends and neighbours of the people affected. [5N] There is also a continual current of visits; married women return to their native village, taking with them their children or some relative of their husband's; young men go to visit their *asék'd* bride, accompanied by a friend or relation to help carry the gift; trading partners come on a visit or are visited. All these visits are also occasions for feasts, not so elaborate as the big ceremonial feasts, but a pleasant interruption of everyday routine. The occurrence of feasts varies somewhat with the calendar; they are most frequent in the autumn after the harvests have been gathered and the cardamum sold, and least common in the early summer before the harvest is ripe, when supplies may be running short.

The most regular of all are the bi-monthly monastery feasts, and since, owing to the fact that I was living in the monastery, I was inevitably in the centre of them, it is these gatherings which represent for me the typical Lepcha crowd. At an ordinary feast about eighty or ninety people will be present; occasionally the feast-givers are poor or unpopular and then there are only thirty or forty; and once, when Tafoor was responsible for a bumper feast, there were well over a hundred. About a dozen lamas are seated in the prayer room; six or seven nuns and a considerable number of other women and old men and young children are crowded together on the floor of the small prayer-drum room, the *lha-gong*. Inside the porch, on the right-hand side, is seated the Mandal; next to him is probably Gongyop, as these two are great friends, and the givers of the feast if they are laymen, and strangers and visitors to the village. [262] Outside are probably two cooking places; one to the front of the monastery is fairly small and on it is probably cooking the vegetable 'curry' (*bi*) which is served as a relish to the staple cereal. On the east side there are probably two or three big pots cooking, one

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produces the result that most Lepchas have two types of behaviour ; 157
 they are far more restrained in public and with strangers than they
 are in the privacy of their own homes. I was naturally never able to 578
 observe this, but in people's stories of their own lives there was a
 constant undercurrent of grumbling and scolding, particularly on
 the part of the women.* Sometimes these undercurrents came
 fairly near the surface in public in the guise of playful teasing.
 Public quarrelling of any sort is so violently disapproved of that
 even minor irritations and annoyances have to be repressed in public ;
 in the home there is not the same social restraint and I have the
 impression that the majority of wives are given to nagging on
 occasion. It must be remembered that most wives are strangers to
 their husband's community and therefore lack the moral and 593
 emotional support of their families which is always available for the
 majority of the men.

The pace of Lepcha life is very leisurely ; the Lepchas are never 461
 in a hurry. When they are doing something, be it work or pleasure,
 they like to do it thoroughly. With work as with pleasure there is
 no hurry or greed ; everything gets done eventually, but it gets
 done slowly, with intervals of rest in between. The Lepchas never
 seem to mind waiting ; often after everybody has gathered for a
 religious ceremony there will be a delay of several hours, while the
 lamas prepare the ritual objects ; nobody objects to this or thinks
 to hurry another up ; they are content to sit and wait until every-
 thing is ready. When a piece of communal work such as the
 repairing of a house or the building of a bridge is in progress only
 about half the people present are likely to be working at any one
 time ; the others will be taking a rest, or joking, or helping to
 prepare the evening meal. The Lepchas work very long hours and
 do not grudge their labour ; but they detest being ordered about
 and see no sense in hurry ; work is a disagreeable necessity which
 should be made as pleasant as possible. A few state that they feel
 happiest after a good day's work ; but for the majority the reason
 for work is to provide for the sensual pleasures which form the chief
 object of life.

Although Lepchas do not allow for quarrelling they admit bad 152
 temper to be natural, particularly if a person is hungry or if he is 201
 finding difficulties in his work. The expression of bad temper is
 stylised ; it is called *shadong ding* and is externalised by the annoyed
 person breaking any of his own property which comes to hand, or

* Numerous examples of this occur in Book Three.